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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INL/LP
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SUBJECT: EMBASSY BOGOTA USES ARTS AND SPORTS DIPLOMACY IN DRUG
DEMAND REDUCTION CAMPAIGN IN CARTAGENA

SUMMARY

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: The Ambassador launched "Do not turn off your light," a drug demand prevention campaign, on November 7 that will provide community development and social mobility opportunities via education, work, arts, and sports to children at risk of drug use. The main event was followed by a baseball game between the Ambassador and Sports Diplomacy Envoy Barry Larkin's teams that emphasized the importance of sports and healthy living as an alternative to drugs. The events had high-level participation and received wide regional media coverage. On November 8, Ambassador Brownfield and Sport Envoy Larkin continued the Sports Diplomacy Program in Barranquilla participating in a baseball clinic for coaches, several press events, and a lunch hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce. END SUMMARY.

DOMESTIC DRUG DEMAND IS GROWING

¶2. (U) While Colombia is a major supplier of illegal psychoactive substances, Colombian drug consumption appears to have increased also. The results of the currently-underway National Household Drug Consumption Survey (the first such survey to take place since 1996) will not be analyzed until the beginning of 2009; however, various first-hand accounts already point to an increasing rate of drug consumption in Colombia as the middle class is expanding and has disposable income. Successful interdiction efforts are also forcing narcotraffickers to target the local market.

NO APAGUES TU LUZ

¶3. (U) "No Apagues Tu Luz" ("Do not turn off your light") - Colombia NAS's Drug Demand Reduction campaign - pursues Colombia's FY2009 Mission Strategic Plan's goals of working on counternarcotics and counterterrorism efforts by fostering community development and social mobility opportunities via education, work, arts, and sports for children at risk of getting involved in drug use.

¶4. (U) On November 7, the Ambassador, Aldo Lale-Demoz (UNODC Representative), Mayor of Cartagena Judith Pinedo Florez, and representatives from the Ministry of Social Protection, the National Directorate of Dangerous Drugs, and various NGOs launched the "No Apagues Tu Luz" initiative. The participants sought to raise awareness of the problem of drug consumption in Colombia and asked the audience to provide "espacios de luz" ("spaces of light") in education, work, sports, and the arts for children. The audience

included community leaders and the Governor of the Bolivar Department Joaco Berrio Villarreal.

¶5. (U) Regional media gave the event extensive coverage. The participation of the 2008 National Beauty Pageant candidates (all at least two feet taller than the Ambassador), well-known musicians, and social activists assured that the message of the drug demand reduction event reached diverse audiences. Barry Larkin's visit was covered by all major North Coast daily papers and on regional and national radio and television channels.

SPORTS DIPLOMACY

¶6. (U) In the afternoon, the Embassy organized a baseball game between Ambassador Brownfield and Sports Diplomacy envoy and former Cincinnati Reds baseball player Barry Larkin's teams, composed of children from the NGO "Ninos de Papel," to emphasize the importance of sports as a means to stay away from drugs and violence. Larkin traveled to Colombia as a Department of State Sports Envoy from November 5-12, 2008, to speak to schools and give baseball clinics in Bogota, Cartagena, and Barranquilla. Also joining Ambassador Brownfield and Larkin in the game were Sports Envoys Steve Laska and Joe Logan. Before the game, Brownfield and Larkin presented gifts of baseball equipment to the participating children donated by the Major League Baseball program "Pitch In." Team Brownfield decimated Team Larkin, despite several obviously wrong umpire calls going against them.

¶7. (U) On November 8, Ambassador Brownfield and Larkin traveled to Barranquilla to participate in Sports Diplomacy activities which included a baseball clinic for coaches, a press conference,

television interviews, and a lunch hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce. Barry Larkin, Steve Laska, and Joe Logan worked with 60 coaches on infield, outfield, and pitching techniques in a clinic held at Tomas Arrieta Stadium. At the beginning of the clinic, the Ambassador received a plaque of appreciation from the Colombian Professional Baseball League for his dedication to the promotion and development of the league. After the clinic, the Ambassador and Larkin participated in a press conference answering numerous questions about sports and U.S. policy related to Colombia by local media.

¶8. (U) In the afternoon, Ambassador Brownfield and Larkin were interviewed separately by a local television journalist and then attended a lunch hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce and attended by numerous local business leaders. During several of these events, Ambassador Brownfield described his wish to assist the development of Colombian baseball at both the professional and youth levels.

BROWNFIELD